## London Free Press

## Slain girl tried to keep boyfriend a secret

Paul Schliesmann, QMI Agency

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<http://www.lfpress.com/contact-us?param=story>

KINGSTON, Ont. - It was a love affair that ended in tragic deaths at Kingston Mills.

A young man read aloud in a Kingston courtroom yesterday a seemingly prescient e-mail, written in text language by Zainab Shafia, exactly four weeks before she was found dead in the Rideau Canal in 2009: "... even one day if sum thing happens to us like dead i [won't] die with out my dream being full filled..."

The young man recalled for the court how in 2008 he sent Zainab a Valentine's Day card at their Montreal high school.

What he received in return was an e-mail explaining the "rules of friendship" they would have to follow, specifically, how to avoid the scrutiny of Zainab's younger brother, Hamed.

The young man, who can't be identified because of a court ban, was testifying Monday at the Kingston Mills murder trial where Hamed Shafia, along with his parents, Mohammad and Tooba, are charged with the first-degree murders of Zainab, her sisters, Sahar and Geeti, and the father's first wife, Rona Amir Mohammad.

Zainab warned the young man to "be aware of my bro[ther] ... and if my bro is around act like a complete stranger. I will call u when we r at skool from the public telephone."

The young man said that despite their mutual attraction, they weren't able to see much of each other. Hamed, he said, discovered their burgeoning relationship after about a month.

With her parents out of the country, Zainab had invited him to their home.

"As soon as I walked in the house she told me to hide in the basement," he recalled.

Hamed was on his way home.

"I was hiding behind a box and her brother directly came and saw me there. He shook my hand and said hi," he said.

Hamed asked him to leave and Zainab later told him that her brother was upset.

In their parents' absence, Zainab was banned by Hamed from going to school.

"She told me her brother's not letting her go out and do anything. He's just keeping her at home," the young man recounted.

The relationship had ended, but a year later Zainab contacted the young man saying she wanted to see him again.

They started meeting secretly at a library near the Shafia home. She had transferred to a nearby French-language school.

Court saw copies of cellphone texts Zainab sent to the young man under the alias "Angel."

"I used to call her Angel," he recalled in a poignant moment in court.

Though she was allowed to go out more, Zainab described for him a difficult home life.

She said that she stayed in her room all day, coming out only for meals to avoid "getting mean looks from her father and brother."

"She told me her dad was mad at her for what she did. That's why they took her out of school," he said. "It took some time for them to forgive her so she could go back to school."

Zainab told the young man she wanted to marry him. He said they needed to wait until he could find a job and get an apartment.

That's when she decided to flee the family home.

She found a women's shelter and cut off contact with most of her family.

Hamed and Mohammad got the young man's cellphone number, however, and began calling about where they could find Zainab.

One day they telephoned when he and Zainab were together. As she listened in, Zainab insisted he not tell them her whereabouts.

"I pretended I had no clue where she was though she was right next to me. I kept on saying, 'I don't know'," he recalled.

"They kept on calling me back and forth. At one point the father said if you don't tell us where she is we're going to the police to make a complaint against you."

They did, telling police he had kidnapped Zainab.

The young man had to bring her to the police station to prove she was over 18 and she didn't want to go home.

Police instructed Mohammad and Hamed not to phone the young man any more.Zainab was eventually contacted at the shelter by her mother, Tooba, who told her daughter that she would be allowed to marry the young man if she would just come home.

Zainab resisted at first, but finally relented.

Court then heard the same testimony previously presented at the trial by Zainab's great-uncle.

Zainab got engaged and then married, the uncle said.

The next day, the Shafias held a wedding celebration party at an Iranian restaurant. When the husband's family didn't arrive, Zainab was convinced to annul the wedding on the spot.

On June 2, 2009, Zainab sent an e-mail to the young man.

She writes that she misses him and that "even one day if sum thing happens to us like dead i wnt die with out my dream being full filled ... we had an amazing love story 2gether i m gonna write it down in a boy with all mine and ur pictures ... i will always keep that book and on top of it i will write true love story... n may be one day if we meet wen we r all old then i will give it too u to see loveu take care... zainab."

On the morning of June 30, 2009, the bodies of Zainab, two of her sisters and Rona Amir Mohammad were found underwater at Kingston Mills in the family's black Nissan Sentra.

The Crown alleges the murders were honour killings - precipitated in part by the young women's association with boys - and that the drownings were staged by the three accused.

On Monday morning, court heard expert testimony from a forensic analyst with the Centre of Forensic Sciences in Toronto who took data off cellphones belonging to Zainab and Sahar.

The Crown didn't go into detail about the text messages recovered from the phones, but showed a number of photos the girls took of themselves and each other.

# Canal victims' home laptop used for murder info

##### [CBC News](http://www.cbc.ca/news/credit.html) Posted: Oct 27, 2011 5:51 PM ET

#### Last Updated: Oct 27, 2011 11:11 PM ET

Someone used a Montreal family's home computer to search the internet for information about murder just days before three sisters and their father's first wife were found dead in a car submerged in a canal near Kingston, Ont.

Tooba Mohammad Yahya, 41, her husband, Mohammad Shafia, 58, and their son, Hamed Mohammad Shafia, 20, have [each pleaded not guilty to four counts of first-degree murder](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/story/2011/10/20/shafia-trial-starts.html), in connection to the deaths of the family's three eldest daughters and the elder Shafia's first wife. They're on trial in Kingston.

The victims are three of Shafia's daughters: Zainab, 19, Sahar, 17, and Geeti, 13, as well as Rona Amir Mohammad, 50, Shafia's first wife, who lived with the family in a polygamous relationship.

The victims. Radio-Canada



The family was on the way back from a trip to Niagara Falls, Ont., when the bodies and sunken car were discovered at the bottom of a Rideau Canal lock in Kingston, Ont.

A Kingston police officer testified Thursday about searches conducted on a laptop used by Hamed Shafia such as "documentaries on murders," "can a prisoner have control over their real estate," "where to commit a murder" and numerous searches for areas with bodies of water.

The trial jury spent part of Thursday morning at the Rideau Canal lock, where the victims' bodies were retrieved in June 2009.

Crown prosecutors requested the visit to show jury members the crime scene. Mohammad Shafia and Hamed Mohammad Shafia joined the jury on the canal visit, under close police watch. Authorities blocked off nearby streets to control access to the site.

The court granted Tooba Mohammad Yahya's request to skip the visit.

On Wednesday, the jury heard testimony from a police investigator who said collision evidence from the crime scene suggests the Nissan Sentra carrying the victims was pushed into the canal.

A collision expert testified about damage found on two cars. Radio-Canada



OPP officer Chris Prent testified that there was no way the car could have accidentally fallen into the canal lock.

"Another vehicle was used to push the Nissan Sentra into the canal. Damages on both vehicles coincide," Prent said. The Nissan's driver seat was leaning too far forward to be able to operate the car, and the airbags never inflated.

On Tuesday, the jury [watched an underwater video](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/story/2011/10/25/shafia-canal-murder-trial-cp.html) shot by Glenn Newell, an OPP diver assigned to examine the submerged car.

The video shows eerie images of the victims' bodies floating freely inside the car, which was stuck in first gear. None of the victims were wearing seat belts.

The defence is expected to argue that the four women died as the result of a road accident.

The Crown alleges the girls' family thought [the teens were dishonoring them by having boyfriends](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/story/2011/10/21/mtl-shafiatrialdaytwo.html), so they killed them and staged the scene to look like an accident.

The defendants have pleaded not guilty. The trial is expected to last into 2012.

# Shafia daughters killed over boyfriends, Crown says

##### The Canadian Press

#### Posted: Oct 21, 2011 12:24 PM ET

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Hamed Shafia (centre), his father Mohammad Shafia (right) and his mother Tooba Mohammad Yahya are charged with four counts of first-degree murder. (Lars Hagberg/Canadian Press)



<http://www.cbc.ca/player/Shows/ID/2158072123/>

A car found at the bottom of an eastern Ontario canal with the bodies of three sisters and their father's first wife suspended in the water inside seemed to trace a very deliberate path, a murder trial heard Friday.

In a case that has raised the issue of so-called honour killings, the Crown alleges the girls' family couldn't bear the "treachery" of their daughters having boyfriends, so they killed them and staged the scene to look like an accident.

But it certainly didn't look like an accident to the first officer on the scene at the Kingston Mills on June 30, 2009, court heard Friday. Kingston police Const. Brent White testified that he first thought the car at the bottom of the locks was the work of pranksters with a stolen vehicle.

The Crown theory of the car's path, which White suspected that day, is that it would have had to travel past a locked gate, over a concrete curb and a rocky outcrop and then make two U-turns to end up in the locks of the canal.

### Bodies floating in car

"In my mind … I'm thinking this is pretty difficult to get that vehicle in that narrow spot," White testified. "It had to be driven there on purpose."

Tooba Mohammad Yahya, 41, her husband, Mohammad Shafia, 58, and their son, Hamed Mohammad Shafia, 20, have each pleaded not guilty to four counts of first-degree murder in the deaths of sisters Zainab, 19, Sahar, 17, and Geeti, 13, as well as Rona Amir Mohammad, 50, Shafia's first wife, who lived with the family in a polygamous relationship.

When the three defence lawyers cross-examined White and another police witness Friday, they suggested there were many other points where a car could have gone into the water much easier and much more directly. Hamed Shafia's lawyer, Patrick McCann, likened the car going in the "circuitous" path the Crown suggests as akin to "threading the needle."

Kingston police Const. Julia Moore testified Friday that when the bodies were discovered they were floating in the car. A police diver took a video camera down into the locks and police at the surface could see Sahar and Rona in the backseat, in seated positions.

Rona Amir Mohammad was Shafia's first wife, but he married Yahya when it became apparent Mohammad couldn't have children. She lived with the family in a polygamous marriage and helped raise the children, court heard.

Zainab likely started out in the front passenger seat, court heard, but was found floating, with her back against the ceiling, facing the rear.

### Motel worker to testify

Geeti, the youngest, was found suspended over the driver's seat, one arm wrapped around the headrest and her head against the door post.

Yahya, the girls' mother, appeared to cry, burying her face in a tissue as Moore described the positioning of the bodies. The two accused men were stoic.

The Montreal family had been on their way home from a trip to Niagara Falls, Ont. Court has heard that a motel manager will testify that when Shafia and Hamed checked in to two rooms for the family that night, at first Shafia said there would be six guests.

There were 10 people on the family trip.

Court heard Thursday, the first day of the trial, that an expert will be called to testify about so-called honour killings and how in extreme cases, killing can be seen in some cultures as a way to restore honour to a family. Disobedience by a female member of the family can cause shame and taint family honour, the expert is expected testify.

### 'Nothing more valuable than our honour'

Crown attorney Laurie Lacelle quoted police wiretaps made surreptitiously in the days after the deaths that show the family's concern for their honour.

"Even if they hoist me up onto the gallows, nothing is more dear to me than my honour," Shafia said. "Let's leave our destiny to God, and may God never make me, you or your mother honourless...There is nothing more valuable than our honour."

The family immigrated to Canada in 2007. They left their home country of Afghanistan in 1992 and lived for a number of years in Pakistan, Australia and Dubai before coming to North America.

Shafia's first wife loved the children dearly, Lacelle said, but she wrote in a diary that Yahya treated her poorly and her husband beat her. She wanted to leave, but told family members that she was afraid if she left Shafia would kill her, Lacelle told the court.

The trial continues Monday and is expected to last between two and three months.

An aerial photo of the crime scene that was shown to the jury on the first day of the trial.Canadian Press



## [National Post http://fullcomment.nationalpost.com/category/full-comment/](http://fullcomment.nationalpost.com/category/full-comment/)

### Chris Selley’s Full Pundit: How do you solve a problem like Shafia?

[**Chris Selley**](http://fullcomment.nationalpost.com/author/cselley/) | Jan 31, 2012 1:09 PM ET | Last Updated: Jan 31, 2012 2:08 PM ET

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* **Let us now dance on the head of a pin**

Use of the term “honour killing” “makes it seem as if femicide is a highly unusual event” and “confined to specific populations within Canadaand specific national cultures or religions in the world at large,” Concordia professors **Yasmin Jiwani** and **Homa Hoodfar** [argue](http://www.montrealgazette.com/news/Should+call+honour+killing/6075589/story.html) in the Montreal *Gazette*. “But Canadian statistics prove otherwise.”

Well … of course they do. But nobody inCanadathinks violence against women is unique to certain cultures. Of course honour killings are a form of gender-based violence, as the professors argue. Of course “honour, passion or convenience … are merely excuses and rationalizations.” Of course these crimes are rare in Canada. But to deny they are distinguishable from, say, a pathologically jealous husband stabbing his wife to death in a fit of rage is to deny the nose on one’s own face.

*The* *Globe and Mail*’s **Margaret Wente** [argues](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/opinions/margaret-wente/call-honour-crimes-what-they-are/article2320140/?utm_medium=Feeds%3A%20RSS%2FAtom&utm_source=Opinions&utm_content=2320140) that honour killings can be distinguished from other forms of domestic violence on account of being “carefully premeditated,” “designed to remove the stain of … sexual misconduct … from the family name,” “often approved or tolerated by the community” and condoned by the wives, and on account of “the perpetrators are invariably convinced of the rightness of their deeds,” even in the aftermath. We’d say that’s a pretty good summary. Wente thinks ”it’s impossible to understand this crime without the culture,” but in fact her definition has nothing to do with culture at all: It merely describes a certain set of circumstances, like the terms “spree killing” or “serial murders.”

If people’s real objection amounts to the fact that unpleasant people use the term “honour killing” to promote bigotry, they’d be infinitely better off just saying so.

There is a legal distinction as well, **Adnan Khan** [argues](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/opinions/opinion/we-have-failed-to-protect-muslim-women-under-threat/article2320218) in the *Globe*. “The vast majority of domestic violence against women inCanada … happen[s] in the moment, in states of rage,” which is no defence but does suggest manslaughter rather than murder. Honour killings are “the acts of psychopaths,” says Khan, and yet the perpetrators aren’t psychopaths. In his view, it is time for the cultures that spawn such people to set aside their traditional defences, regardless of their validity — it has nothing to do with Islam, domestic violence exists in every culture, etc. — and confront the problem head-on.

The ***Globe*’s editorialists** [agree](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/opinions/editorials/many-in-canada-failed-the-slain-shafia-sisters/article2319987/), while cautioning that “no educational video will stop people like Mohammed Shafia” and that “not everyone will accept [the] help” social services agencies offer women and children at risk. The solutions, they say, are cultural change and unflinching judicial condemnation of acts such as the Shafia murders, which we saw inKingston, Ont., this week.

“When the verdict came in, it was obvious that Canadians had taken the three sisters and their aunt to their hearts,” the ***Gazette*’s editorialists** quite rightly[observe](http://www.montrealgazette.com/news/lessons+learn+from+Shafia+case/6075574/story.html). “They were not foreigners. They were us, members of the Canadian family.” They urge authorities to examine and learn from other countries’ efforts to help women and children living in medieval situations.

The ***Calgary Herald*’s editorialists** [are quite certain](http://www.calgaryherald.com/life/stand+guard+girls/6076279/story.html) child protection authorities in Quebec were “cowed by cultural sensitivities.” We’re prepared to believe it, but children of all creeds and colours fall through the cracks. Quebec is hardly the land of cultural relativism these days, after all. If anything, authorities may simply have been unprepared to deal with such rampaging levels of dysfunction. And we’re a bit confused by the *Herald* suggesting the Immigrant Investor Program, under which Shafia basically bought his way into Canada, was “also on trial.” Untreated filicidal rage should certainly be grounds for inadmissibility to Canada — though we can’t imagine anyone ticking the “yes” box on the form — but at least the victims had a *chance* at a good life here.

**Un Canadien errant?**

We’re not entirely sure, based on **Andrew Cohen**’s [column](http://www.ottawacitizen.com/business/Smugness+doesn+look+good+Canada/6075735/story.html) in the *Ottawa Citizen*, whether he thinks Stephen Harper’s (he says) smug and immodest trumpeting ofCanada’s economic achievements in Davos is a new thing or an old thing. He says “self-righteousness has long been a part of our genetic code” (boy, howdy), but also that Harper’s address somehow signalled “a new-found aggressiveness.” He doesn’t like it, in any event.

The *Citizen*’s **Dan Gardner** [congratulates](http://www.ottawacitizen.com/health/matter+fairness/6075734/story.html) Harper for “encouraging us to talk about” reforming old-age security, “at considerable political” risk to himself. It’s “something that should have been done long ago,” he says, if only because retiring at 65 doesn’t make sense now that we live longer. (Or it didn’t make sense back then. One or the other.) Unfortunately, says Gardner, the justifications Harper uses to justify the move — next stop, Greece! — are pure hyperbole. Just like the arguments the New Democrats and Liberals are using against the reforms, as **John Ivison** [notes](http://www.nationalpost.com/todays-paper/Tories+right+side+pension+reform/6075904/story.html) in the*Natioanl Post*.

Hmm. Do two hyperboles make a … regular bole?

National Post